

Message Text

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ACTION SY-05

INFO OCT-01 EA-10 NEA-11 ISO-00 FBOE-00 A-01 AID-05
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FM AMEMBASSY DACCA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9839

INFO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY

AMCONSUL KARACHI

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

C O N F I D E N T I A L DACCA 3943

NEW DELHI FOR RSO; KARACHI FOR C.O. CO B; HONG KONG FOR RSS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ASEC

SUBJECT: BOMB ATTEMPT

REFS: A. DACCA 3830, B. DACCA 3834

SUMMARY: THE DEVICE DISCOVERED AT THE GSO COMPOUND SATURDAY EVENING, JUNE 17 WAS EXPLODED BY BANGLADESH ARMY DEMOLITION PERSONNEL. IT CONTAINED A DETONATOR AS WELL AS THE EXPLOSIVE CHARGE. THERE HAVE BEEN NO FURTHER THREATS OR INCIDENTS.
END SUMMARY.

1. UNIFORMED POLICE ARE NOW GUARDING PRINCIPAL U.S. INSTALLATIONS (CHANCERY, AID OFFICE, GSO COMPOUND, ICA CULTURAL CENTER, ICA EXHIBIT HALL, GSO WAREHOUSE) ON 24-HOUR BASIS, WHICH WE INTEND TO MAINTAIN AT LEAST UNTIL NEXT MONDAY. (NORMALLY ONLY THE MAIN ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING IN WHICH THE CHANCERY IS LOCATED IS GUARDED BY UNIFORMED POLICE, AND THAT ONLY DURING NORMAL DUTY HOURS.)

2. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO DETERMINE BY WHOM OR WHEN
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PLASTIC BAY CONTAINING EXPLOSIVE DEVICE WAS BROUGHT INTO GSO COMPOUND. THE GAS PUMP NEXT TO WHICH DEVICE WAS FOUND IS NORMALLY LOCKED AND WAS NOT USED AFTER MID-MORNING JUNE 17. ABOUT ONE HUNDRED PEOPLE ATTENDED THE TWO MOVIE SHOWINGS THAT EVENING; MOST OF THEM ARRIVED BY CAR. HOWEVER WE SLIGHTLY FAVOR THEORY THAT DEVICE WAS DEPOSITED EARLIER IN THE DAY.

3. EMBASSY SECURITY WATCH COMMITTEE IS MEETING TO DETERMINE WHAT ADDITIONAL PRECAUTIONS CAN AND SHOULD BE TAKEN.

4. THE BD ARMY OFFICER IN CHARGE OF DISPOSING OF THE DEVICE, MAJOR MAHMOODUZZAMAN, MADE AN ORAL REPORT TO DATT, SUMMARIZED BY THE LATTER AS FOLLOWS:

A. THE DEVICE WAS A PIPE ELBOW CONTAINING A LIVE EXPLOSIVE CHARGE WEIGHTING ABOUT 4 TO 6 OUNCES. ENDS OF THE PIPE WERE CAPPED, AND THE DETONATOR WAS INSIDE. THE ENGINEERS ATTEMPTED, GINGERLY, TO REMOVE THE CAPS BY HAND AND COULD NOT. BECAUSE OF THE DANGER OF A DETONATION THEY DID NOT USE TOOLS TO OPEN IT BUT BLEW UP THE DEVICE TO DESTROY IT. MAJOR MAHMOOD GUESSES THE EXPLOSIVE CHARGE WAS PLASTIC.

B. THE DEVICE, ACCORDING TO MAHMOOD, IS A VERY SIMPLE ONE. EXCEPT FOR THE POSSIBLE PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE, ALL COMPONENTS ARE AVAILABLE ON THE MARKET HERE IN BANGLADESH. PLASTIC EXPLOSIVE, SO FAR AS HE KNOWS, IS NOT AVAILABLE IN BANLGADESH; IF IT IS AVAILABLE IT IS MOST CERTAINLY A RESTRICTED ITEM AND CANNOT BE BOUGHT BY PRIVATE CITIZENS. BECAUSE HE HAS NOT COME ACROSS A DEVICE LIKE THIS BEFORE, EXCEPT IN TRAINING, MAHMOOD SPECULATES THAT THE IDEA FOR THE DEVICE AND THE PLASTIC

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EXPLOSIVE (IF, INDEED, THE EXPLOSIVE WAS PLASTIC) MAY HAVE BEEN "BORROWED" FROM ABROAD.

C. THE DEVICE WAS TO HAVE BEEN TRIGGERED BY A WRISTWATCH AND BATTERY ATTACHED TO THE DETONATOR. THE WISHWATCH ("CAMY" BRAND) WAS TRIGGERED TO SET OFF THE DETONATOR AT SIX O'CLOCK. THE REASON THE DEVICE DID NOT EXPLODE WAS THAT THE HOUR HAND HAD FALLEN FROM THE WIRE TO THE BATTERY COULD NOT BE MADE. WHOEVER MADE THE DEVICE TOOK OFF THE MINUTE HAND (OTHERWISE HE WOULD ONLY HAVE HAD 60 MINUTES FROM THE TIME THE WATCH WAS STARTED TO THE EXPLOSION) AND THE HOUR HAND, THEN ATTEMPTED TO REPLACE THE HOUR HAND IN SUCH A WAY AS TO GIVE HIM UP TO 12 HOURS BEFORE DETONATION. MAHMOOD SPECULATES THE PERSON WHO MADE THE DEVICE DIDN'T -- OR COULDN'T -- REAFFIX THE HOUR HAND PROPERLY.

D. THE ELECTRICAL CHARGE TO THE DETONATOR WAS TO COME FROM A NINE-VOLT BATTERY (BRAND NAME "FLYING BOMB"), AVAILABLE COMMERCIALY IN BANGLADESH AND COMMONLY USED IN TRANSISTOR RADIOS.

E. HAD THE BOMB BEEN DETONATED, FRAGMENTS FROM THE PIPE WOULD HAVE HAD THE EFFECT OF SHRAPNEL FROM A HAND GRENADE AND COULD HAVE SERIOUSLY INJURED OR KILLED ONE

OR MORE PEOPLE HAD THEY BEEN NEARBY (WITHIN ABOUT TEN METERS). IF DETONATED NEAR THE PETROLEUM PUMPS, THE DEVICE WOULD HAVE DAMAGED THE PUMPS AND SET FIRE TO THE GASOLINE IN THEM AND, POSSIBLY, TO OTHER PETROLEUM PRODUCTS IN THE AREA; THE RESULTING FIRE AND ANY SECONDARY EXPLOSIONS WHICH MIGHT HAVE OCCURRED COULD HAVE SPREAD THE FLAMES TO NEARBY BUILDINGS.

F. ALTHOUGH MAJOR MAHMED AND HIS MEN HAD BECOME FAMILIAR WITH EXPLOSIVE DEVICES OF THIS GENERAL DESIGN DURING TRAINING, THEY HAVE NOT SEEN OTHER DEVICES SO SIMILAR TO THIS ONE AS TO RECOGNIZE IT AS HAVING BEEN MADE BY AN INDIVIDUAL OR ORGANIZATION.

G. THE REMAINING PARTS OF THE DEVICE (THE WATCH AND THE BATTERY) WILL BE RETURNED TO THE U.S. EMBASSY
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ALONG WITH A TECHNICAL DESCRIPTION AND A SKETCH.
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